Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A high purity Nb sputtering target containing an amount of Ta and an amount of oxygen as impurities dispersed therein, the amount of Ta in the target being in a range of 550 to 3000 ppm, the amount of oxygen in the target being in a range of 10 to 200 ppm, wherein a dispersion of the Ta content in the target is within 30%, and a dispersion of the oxygen content in the target is within 80%, the dispersion of the Ta content and the dispersion of the oxygen content being respectively defined by the following equation, for respective measured content values of 9 specimens sampled at respective predetermined positions in the target:

dispersion (%) = {(maximum value - minimum value) / (maximum value + minimum value)} X 100,

wherein an average grain diameter of Nb in the high purity Nb sputtering target is 100 μm or less, each grain of the Nb has a grain diameter in the range of 0.1 to 10 times an average grain diameter, and a grain size ratio of adjacent grains is in the range of 0.1 to 10,

wherein the high purity Nb target has a recrystallized structure formed by heat-treating at a temperature in a range of 800 to 1300 °C for one hour or more.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously Presented) The sputtering target as set forth in claim 1:
wherein the Ta content is in a range of 550 to 1000 ppm.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Canceled)

6. (Canceled)

7. (Previously Presented) The sputtering target as set forth in claim 1:

wherein the sputtering target is bonded with a backing plate made of Al or an Al alloy.

8. (Original) The sputtering target as set forth in claim 7:
wherein the sputtering target and the backing plate are diffusion bonded.

9. (Previously Presented) The sputtering target as set forth in claim 1:
wherein the sputtering target is applied to form a Nb film for a liner of an Al interconnection film or an Al alloy interconnection film.

10. (Previously Presented) The sputtering target as set forth in claim 1,
the grain size ratio of adjacent grains is in the range of 0.5 to 5, and a dispersion of the grain size ratio of adjacent grains is within 30% the dispersion being defined by the following equation, for respective measured values of 9 specimens sampled at respective predetermined positions in the target:
dispersion (%) = {(maximum value – minimum value)/(maximum + minimum value)} X 100.

11. (Canceled)

12. (Canceled)

13. (Canceled)

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Previously Presented) The sputtering target as set forth in claim 10:
wherein the sputtering target is bonded with a backing plate made of Al.

16. (Original) The sputtering target as set forth in claim 15:
wherein the sputtering target and the backing plate are diffusion bonded.

17. (Previously Presented) The sputtering target as set forth in claim 10:
wherein the sputtering target is used to form a Nb film for a liner of an Al interconnection film or an Al alloy interconnection film.

18. (Cancelled)

19. (Cancelled)

20. (Previously Presented) The sputtering target as set forth in claim 10: wherein the oxygen content is in the range of 10 to 100 ppm.

21. (Previously Presented) The sputtering target as set forth in claim 20: wherein the sputtering target is bonded with a backing plate made of Al.

22. (Original) The sputtering target as set forth in claim 21: wherein the sputtering target and the backing plate are diffusion bonded.

23. (Previously Presented) The sputtering target as set forth in claim 21: wherein the sputtering target is used to form a Nb film for a liner of an Al interconnection film or an Al alloy interconnection film.

24. (Previously Presented) A high purity Nb sputtering target consisting essentially of Nb for forming a Nb liner film of an Al interconnection film in applying dual damascene interconnection technology, wherein the target contains an amount of Ta impurity dispersed therein, the amount of Ta in the target being in a range of 550 to 3000 ppm, and a dispersion of the Ta content in the target being within 30%, wherein the dispersion of the Ta content is defined by the following equation, for respective measured content values of 9 specimens sampled at respective predetermined positions in the target:

dispersion (%) = {(maximum value - minimum value) / (maximum value + minimum value)} X 100.

25. (Previously Presented) A high purity Nb sputtering target consisting essentially of Nb for forming a Nb liner film of an Al interconnection film in applying dual damascene interconnection technology, wherein the target contains an amount of oxygen as an impurity, the amount of oxygen in the target being in a range of 10 to 200 ppm, and a dispersion of the oxygen content in the target being within 80%, wherein the dispersion of the oxygen content is defined by the following equation, for respective measured content values of 9 specimens sampled at respective predetermined positions in the target:

dispersion (%) = {(maximum value - minimum value) / (maximum value + minimum value)} X 100.

26. (Cancelled).

27. (Previously Presented) A high purity Nb sputtering target consisting essentially of Nb for forming a Nb liner film of an Al interconnection film in applying dual damascene interconnection technology, wherein the high purity Nb target has a recrystallized structure formed by heat-treating a high purity Nb plate at a temperature in a range of 800 to 1300 °C for one hour or more, in which an average grain diameter of Nb is 100 μm or less, each grain of the Nb has a grain diameter in the range of 0.1 to 10 times an average grain diameter, and a grain size ratio of adjacent grains is in the range of 0.1 to 10.

28. (Currently Amended) The high purity Nb sputtering target as set forth in claim 27, wherein the high purity Nb plate is formed by plastic working a Nb ingot at a working rate of 55% ~~or more~~ to 95%.